DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 218 722 EA 014 732

AUTHOR Whitehead, LeRoy E.
TITLE Some Problems of Educational Planning in Federal States.
PUB DATE Oct 81
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Educational Planning (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Planning; *Federal Government; *Federal State Relationship; *Governmental Structure; Organizational Theories; Policy Formation; *Problems; Research Needs
IDENTIFIERS Federalism (Governmental Structure); *Intergovernmental Relations; Nationwide Planning

ABSTRACT

Both empirical and theoretical considerations suggest that countries that have adopted federal systems of government have a tendency toward certain types of problems which may constrain the success of educational planning at every level in the educational system. Specific operational examples of such problems are lack of role clarification, and lack of coordination of policies and programs within and between various levels of government. This paper urges greater attention to the study of these problems, their effects on educational planning, and of the various mechanisms being used in an attempt to resolve the problems. Attempts to draw generalizations across a broad range of federal states are encouraged, since such a process would help to enhance understanding of problems related to educational planning in both federal and unitary states. (Author/PGD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED218722

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
LeRoy E. Whitehead
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SOME PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING IN FEDERAL STATES

by

LeRoy E. Whitehead

INTRODUCTION

A number of states, including some of the most developed industrially and some of the least developed, have adopted federal systems of government.[1] Some of the fundamental assumptions of the federal form of government are diametrically opposed to fundamental assumptions underlying unitary forms of government. Furthermore, theoretical considerations arising from these fundamental assumptions suggest that federal systems may be prone to certain problems critically related to successful planning; particularly problems regarding the clarification of roles and the coordination of policies and programs within and between the various levels of government. The purpose of this paper is to urge that greater attention be given to the study of these problems, and to contribute some of the broad outlines necessary for a conceptual framework for such study.

EA 014 732

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Educational Planning (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October, 1981).

NEED FOR STUDY

To date, the literature of educational planning appears to have largely ignored the question of possible significant differences in the types of problems which may be encountered in educational planning in federal and unitary government settings. Similarly, the literature of federal-state[2] relations in education, which has for at least a decade offered much empirical evidence that the problems referred to do exist and are of a serious nature, is only just beginning to exhibit an awareness of important implications for educational planning in federal states.

Much work is needed to gather together such information as is available, and to obtain missing information from a broad range of federal states so that generalizations may be drawn about problems of educational planning which may be peculiar to federal states. Whether or not such peculiarities are found, such studies could help to enhance our understanding of planning problems in both federal and unitary states.

The deficiencies which exist in the literature are certainly understandable. Educational planning has become a distinct and respectable discipline only in

the decades since World War II. The concepts and techniques of the discipline are still in a formative stage. Furthermore, it has only been in roughly the same time period -- the years during and since World War II -- that federal governments have begun to view education as an important instrument of national policy, and to undertake large-scale activities in the field.[3] Thus it has only been in the post-war era that some of the problems we now see in the educational systems of federal states began to emerge.

Perhaps during the 1980's the discipline of eductional planning will have developed enough, the course of federal-state relations in eduction will have evolved enough, and the passage of time will have given us perspective enough that we can seriously begin systematic consideration of some important, unanswered questions.

The answers to such questions would be valuable to those who are concerned with educational planning from a vantage point within a federal system. They would also be valuable to those who are concerned with educational planning from an international vantage point, and who must take into account the peculiarities of federal systems which may fall within their purview.

It will not be easy, of course, to draw the kinds of generalizations that have been suggested. Federalism may be more a set of principles or an approach to government than it is a specific catalogue of required structures or institutions. While there are some salient structural features that recur rather consistently, there are as many variations on the basic themes as there are federal states.[4] Beyond that, each federal state has distinctions in its geography, history, social make-up, constitutional division of power and so on. The ability to draw useful generalizations from such disparate sources of data will depend to a large extent upon our ability to choose an appropriate level of abstraction, and also upon our ability to conceptualize in a very creative way a framework within which to identify and investigate problems. This paper can provide no more than a single very modest step in that direction.

TAXONOMY OF PLANNING-RELATED PROBLEMS

A simple taxonomy of planning-related problems might include both problems which may exist internal to or in direct association with the planning process itself; and problems which may exist in the organizational

framework within which the planning process must proceed, and which may impinge upon the planning process.

Ruscoe (1969) has broken down problems of the former type into three general categories: problems involving the legal basis for planning, staffing problems, and technical problems. He has argued that the legal, staffing and technical conditions conventionally associated with educational planning, while necessary, are not sufficient, either singly or in concert, to produce successful planning. Even when the internal conditions are fully met, problems existing in the organizational framework may render the climate unresponsive or actively hostile toward planning, thus hindering the success of planning activities. Ruscoe has broken down problems of this latter type into two general categories: those involving political constraints, and those involving administrative constraints.

This paper focuses on problems of the latter type, since it seems likely that planning problems directly attributable to the 'federalness' of federal states are most likely to occur in the areas of political and administrative constraints. With the possible

exception of problems regarding the legal basis for planning, the internal categories of problems seem less likely to be unduly influenced by the nature of federalism itself.

Whether the organizational environment provided by the federal form of government is inherently more unresponsive or hostile to the planning process than that provided by a unitary form of government is not yet known. Nor is it yet known whether such unresponsiveness or hostility may be expected to arise from the same or different types of sources in federal and unitary settings. These are questions which are still to be worked out, both theoretically and empirically. This paper attempts to analyze only the federal side of the equation.

OPERATIONAL EXAMPLES OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

Ruscoe's typology of planning problems is cast at a rather abstract level, and the notions of political and administrative constraints may seem difficult to operationalize. Echoes of these two concepts may be found in organization theory, however, and their formulation there may be more easily translatable into operational terms.[5]

Organization theory suggests that an organization must have a goal or an hierarchy of goals. The structural and processual mechanisms by which an organization establishes its goals and attendant policies are very important. An organization can be at a serious disadvantage if such mechanisms and processes are insufficiently developed, are poorly articulated, or if they fail to function. Certainly, planning is not possible, by definition, in the absence of goals and policies.

In large organizations of any kind, and especially in governmental settings, the establishment of goals and policies is largely a political process. Hence, any disability or failure in a federal state to produce a clear and coherent set of goals and policies for its educational system would be an example of a political constraint on educational planning.

Similarly, with respect to the category of administrative constraints, organization theory suggests that there are at least two very central administrative processes. One of these is the assignment of differentiated tasks or roles to various actors within the organization. The other is the coordination of activities, once the division of labour

has been achieved. Even the best plan cannot be put to use if the administrative system is inadequate to implement it. Hence, any disability or failure in a federal state to achieve a clear allocation of roles, or to achieve coordination of activities among various levels of government with respect to the educational system would be examples of administrative constraints on educational planning.

SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The foregoing, admitedly much-simplified analysis suggests, then, that difficulties in the areas of policy-making, role clarification, and coordination within and between levels of government could detract from the viability of educational planning in a federal state. There is ample empirical evidence to suggest that these three types of difficulties may be common in federal states.

Whitehead (1981) recently reported a review of literature which centred on federal involvement in education in the United States of America, Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany. That review noted that while federal involvement in education in the subject countries has produced some beneficial effects,

some serious problems of federal-state cooperation in education remain to be solved. The main problem themes which emerged were: the need for clearly defined, widely accepted policies and goals, both at the federal and state levels; the need for clarification of roles at all levels of government, including federal, state and local levels; and the need for coordination of policies and programs, both among various branches of federal government, and between federal government and the states. The latter point included the need for realistic joint planning between levels of government, including the local level.

In Canada, the situation is no better. Though the federal government has no 'official' presence in education, its actual presence is both well-known and well-documented (Hodgson, 1976). Despite massive federal involvement, however, examiners of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1976) judged federal education policy totally inadequate. With only two notable exceptions, the examiners also found serious deficiencies in the educational policies of the provinces as well, and noted some serious implications for long-term planning.

Similar kinds of problems also exist in the less developed federal countries: the example of Nigeria is well-known. There, the constitutional sharing of educational power between the federal and state governments has resulted not in coordination and cooperation, but in a sort of two-tier school system with federal and state schools engaging in what is often bitter competition with each other.

Empirical evidence also suggests that the presence of such problems in federal countries has had a constraining effect on successful educational planning. A simple reference to a single, well-known problem may serve to underscore this point. In both Canada and the United States at the present time, many jobs requiring technically trained personnel remain unfilled, while at the same time thousands of people, including many recent graduates of the educational systems, remain unemployed for want of the particular skills required by employers.

THE NATURE OF FEDERALISM

Is there anything inherent in the nature of federal government which may give rise to the types of problems identified above? Examination of some fundamental

points in the theory of federalism suggests that there is. It must be stated, however, that the level of analysis employed here is not yet sophisticated enough to determine whether the federal approach necessarily leads to the identified types of problems, but it does seem quite clear that the tendency is there.

Perhaps one of the most fundamental notions of federalism is the dispersal of power among autonomous, but interdependent power centres, with neither the federal government nor the state governments being either inferior or superior to each other. This is quite different from the centralization of power which is the fundamental notion of unitary government. The purpose behind the dispersion of power is the protection of individual and regional liberties through the provision of checks and balances. The literature admits that the dispersion of power may make federal government less efficient than unitary government, but considers the degree of inefficiency a small price to pay for the resulting benefits.

With the dispersion of power and the effective check this places on unilateral decision-making, it can readily be seen that bargaining and negotiation among the power centres must be prime features of a federal

system[6]. Dubnick and Gitelson (1981) have stated this point in rather emphatic terms:

> Taking the formal definition, federalism is a nonhierarchical, non-centralized pattern of interactions among member units in an organization. Ideally, it is a system that operates on a principle of conflict among member units that can be resolved only through negotiations and the development of an acceptable concensus to which disagreeing units can consent. This conflict-consent model is in contrast to a unitary system in which a single dominant unit renders a decision that is imposed on subordinated units. The subordinates should defer to the leading entity and cooperate in carrying out its mandates. Reluctance to cooperate is met with coercive sanctions. This is called a cooperative-coercive model. (p.65) (Emphasis in original.)

Despite what may be written in a constitution, the relationships between power centres in a federal system are dynamic, rather than static. Given the interdependence of their assigned responsibilities, there is every reason to believe that each will

regularly intrude upon the other's domain, either wittingly or unwittingly.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION THROUGH NEGOTIATION

It appears, then, that if the problems of policymaking, role clarification and coordination are to be resolved and remain resolved in a federal system, they must be resolved through continuing processes of bargaining and negotiation. Such processes must provide for the resolution of differences between federal and state governments, as well as for the resolution of differences between various branches of the federal government, and between various state governments in cases where regional interests may vary at the state level. If such processes do not occur, or are ineffective in resolving the problems, successful educational planning at each level of government may be seriously constrained.

If a process of bargaining and negotiation is to take place, there seem to be at least two pre-conditions. First, the parties must be willing to enter into the process. This implies recognition of a legitimate role for each party. This condition has not always existed, particularly in those federations where

educational responsibility is reserved to the states, and where the states have failed to acknowledge any federal stake in the planning of or the results of educational activity. Second, and perhaps more important, there must be adequate structures or mechanisms to facilitate the bargaining and negotiation process.

Traditionally, an integrated national system of political parties operating at both federal and state levels has provided an important forum for much federal-state negotiation, and has been expected to take on much of the responsibility for coordinating federal and state policies and programs. Also, federal institutions, including the federal civil service, have been expected to be representative of state and regional interests and viewpoints. However, neither of these traditional expectations are being very well realized in many federal systems.[7]

If the traditional mechanisms no longer work, then new ones must be developed[8]. A variety of mechanisms are being used in federal systems with varying degrees of success. Federal offices or departments of education, councils of state education ministers, education funding commissions and joint federal-state

educational planning commissions are among the mechanisms being tried. None of these new mechanisms have been totally successful, and some have created new problems. Definitive descriptions of these agencies and their operations are still hard to find, and critical assessments are almost non-existent, especailly as regards their effects on successful educational planning. It is, as a result, very difficult to judge their effectivenss in resolving the critical problems. In addition to studying the problems, therefore, attention must also be given to a study of the various mechanisms being tried in attempt to resolve the problems, and their planning-related effects, in hopes of identifying the most fruitful approaches to problem resolution.

SUMMARY

Federal states may have a tendency toward certain types of problems which could affect the success of educational planning. Some specific operational examples of these types of problems are lack of role clarification and lack of policy and program coordination within and between levels of government. Further analysis may uncover other operational examples as well. This paper

has urged greater attention to the study of these problems and their effects on educational planning, and has suggested some of the broad outlines necessary for a conceptual framework for such studies.

NOTES

This paper is a condensed version of a paper presented at the 1981 annual meeting of the International Society for Educational Planning, held in Toronto, Ontario.

1 Examples of developed federal states are the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Australia and Canada. Some less developed federal states are Brazil, India and Nigeria.

2 The constituent regional level governmental units have various names. The term federal-state should be read as synonymous with the terms federal-provincial, federal-canton, and so forth.

3 Most earlier federations, such as the United States of America, Australia, Canada and, more recently, the Federal Republic of Germany have given constitutional responsibility for education to the constituent states. Recently, broad interpretations of federal constitutional powers, and in some cases constitutional amendments, have permitted federal activity in the area of education. The constitutions

of some more recently formed federations, such as Brazil, India and Nigeria, have divided responsibility for education between federal and state governments.

4 For a more thorough discussion of federalism and its variations see, for example, Wheare (1963) and Watts (1970).

5 For a more thorough discussion of organization theory see, for example, Hodge and Anthony (1979).

6 In Canada, the confrontation between the federal government and the provinces over the patriation of and amendments to the constitution provide a dramatic example of this point.

7 An excellent summary of the situation in Canada is presented in Cairns (1979, pp.4-10). For more detailed examination of how a specific Canadian political partylost its ability to perform a national integrating role, see Smith (1981).

8 The absence or breakdown of mechanisms for the coordination and integration of the various branches of national governments is an important theme addressed by Beer (1975), as is the need to develop such mechanisms, which he terms meta-systems. While Beer's work is not without fault, it may well have theoretical relevance to the kind of study advocated in this paper.

REFERENCES

Beer, S. Platform for Change. London: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.

Cairns, A.C. From Interstate to Intrastate Federalism in Canada. Institute Discussion Papers No. 5. Kingston: Queen's University Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1979.

Dubnick, M., & Gitelson, A. Nationalizing State Policies. In J.J. Hanus (Ed.), The Nationalization of State Government. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1981.

Hodge, B.J., & Anthony, W.P. Organization Theory: An Environmental Approach. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979.

Hodgson, E.D. Federal Intervention in Public Education. Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1976.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Reviews of National Policies for Education: Canada. Paris: 1976.

Ruscoe, G.C. The Conditions for Success in Educational Planning. Paris: Unesco: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1969.

Smith, D.E. Liberals on the Prairies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.

Watts, R.L. Multicultural Societies and Federalism. Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism No. 8, Ottawa, 1970.

Wheare, K.C. Federal Government. London: Oxford University Press, 1963. Fourth edition.

Whitehead, L.E. Federal-Provincial Relations in Education: A Comparative View. In G. Ivany & M. Manley-Casimir (Eds.), Federal-Provincial Relations: Education Canada. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1981.